

APR 30 1973

# SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

415 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017 (212) 512-2000

April 25, 1973

Dear Professor Lederberg:

I deeply regret that it has taken me so long to respond to your kind letter of April 6, which arrived while I was on a trip abroad. Your "letter to the editor" is clearly an important contribution in its own right, and it would do honor to Scientific American for us to present it. I am afraid, however, that we have not yet decided that we will be able to do so.

The problem is not primarily one of length, although that aspect does daunt us. As you can imagine, we will have to show your letter to Gunther Stent, and he will probably want to write a reply. That, of course, would make the discussion even longer.

What concerns us even more is the relation of your letter and the general function of Scientific American. As you know, we exist for the purpose of giving scholars a forum to present popular lectures to a broad audience. We are not a scholarly journal. This is not to say, of course, that if someone disagrees with one of our authors, we want to push the disagreement under the rug. On the contrary, we treasure our letters section as a way of showing the general reader that science is a lively discourse rather than stone tablets handed down from the mount.

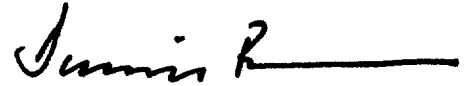
The fact remains that we cannot go too far in this direction. If we did, we would encourage the submission of other letters like your own, and we would have to sacrifice much space that we sorely need for articles. To make matters worse, we have already had one round of correspondence about the Stent article.

Professor Joshua Lederberg      - 2 -

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Be all this as it may, we may very well publish your letter. We are currently discussing the matter among ourselves, and as soon as we have arrived at a conclusion, I shall of course write you again.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dennis R.", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dennis Flanagan  
Editor

DF:ap

Professor Joshua Lederberg  
Department of Genetics  
School of Medicine  
Stanford University  
Stanford, California 94305